

70. ~~(Amended)~~ An apparatus for use in a drill string and drill bit assembly, comprising:

a first drill string member for attachment to the drill string;

a second member for attachment to at least one drilling member intermediate said first drill string member and said drill bit assembly; and

E1 a resiliently deformable connecting member between the first member and the second member for allowing tilting the first member with respect to the second member and to said bit assembly while transmitting torque and weight from the first member to the second member, said connecting member [operative to transfer] including resiliently deformable means for transferring a major portion of said transmitted torque and weight to the second member, and the second member being connected by the connecting member to the first member in a free-floating relationship, thereby allowing the second member to tilt and move laterally with respect to the first member in response to reaction forces experienced during use of the drill bit.

86. (Amended) An assembly for incorporating along a drill string, comprising:

a first member including a drill string;

a second member including a drill bit assembly;

E2 a transfer member for transmitting weight and torque between the first member and the second member; and

a resiliently deformable connecting member extending between the first member and the second member permitting the first member to tilt with respect to the second member, said connecting member [operative to transfer] including resiliently deformable means for transferring a major portion of said ~~transmitted weight and torque~~ to the second member and to said bit assembly, and wherein the second member is connected to the first member in a free-floating

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~~relationship, allowing the second member to tilt and move laterally with respect to the first member under an applied load to the drill string
s experienced during use of the drill bit.~~

Remarks

Applicants sincerely appreciate the Examiner's courtesy in discussing this application with the undersigned during the telephone communication conducted on this date.

As indicated during the telephone conference, Applicants acknowledge that the claims referred to in numbered Section 15 of the Office Action as being allowable over the prior art are Claims 90, 91, and 92, and not Claims 86-88 as indicated at that point.

Applicants requested that the Examiner consider amendments to Applicants' claims that would more specifically limit the claimed invention to one in which a resiliently deformable connecting member was employed for transmitting weight from the first member to the second member. Additionally, Applicants have amended the claims to expressly recite that the weight being transferred is between the drill string member and the bit assembly. Additionally, the claims have been amended to replace the term "operative to transfer" with the means plus function term "including resiliently deformable means for transferring." Amendments of this scope were made in independent Claims 70 and 86.

Additionally, Applicants have cancelled Claim 89.

As urged by Applicants during the telephone conference, none of the art cited against Applicants' claims teaches an apparatus in which weight is transmitted through a resiliently deformable connecting member. In this regard, it is respectfully submitted that the *Black* reference does not employ resiliently deformable means for transferring a major portion of the